Amendments to the Claims

The current listing of the claims replaces all previous amendments and listings of the claims.

1. and 2. (Canceled)

3. (Currently Amended) A branching method for an optical fiber cable containing a plurality of plastic optical fibers, comprising:

disposing the plurality of plastic optical fibers in a plurality of slots of a spacer;

removing a covering of the cable at a single portion of the cable; and

cutting a desired optical fiber in the cable at the single portion without cutting the cable in its entirety, at a non-terminal position of the cable, to form a terminal of the fiber,

wherein the desired optical fiber is cut and then withdrawn from the cable.

4. (Currently Amended) A branching method for an optical fiber cable containing a plurality of plastic optical fibers, comprising:

disposing the plurality of plastic optical fibers in a plurality of slots of a spacer;

removing a covering of the cable at a single portion of the cable; and

cutting a desired optical fiber in the cable at the single portion without cutting the cable in its entirety, at a non-terminal position of the cable, to form a terminal of the fiber,

wherein ~~the cable is provided with a slotted spacer, and~~ the desired optical fiber is cut without cutting the spacer[[,]] to form the terminal of the optical fiber.

5. (Currently Amended) A branching method for an optical fiber cable containing a plurality of plastic optical fibers, comprising:

disposing the plurality of plastic optical fibers in a plurality of slots of a spacer;

removing a covering of the cable at a single portion of the cable; and

cutting a desired optical fiber in the cable at the single portion without cutting the cable in its entirety, at a non-terminal position of the cable, to form a terminal of the fiber,

wherein the cable is provided with a tension member, and the desired optical fiber is cut without cutting the tension member, to form the terminal of the optical fiber.

6. (Original) The branching method according to Claim 5, wherein without substantially elastically deforming the tension member, the desired optical fiber is cut to form the terminal of the optical fiber.

7. and 8. (Canceled)

9. (Currently Amended) A branching method for an optical fiber cable containing a plurality of plastic optical fibers, comprising:

disposing the plurality of plastic optical fibers in a plurality of slots of a spacer;

removing a covering of the cable at a single portion of the cable; and

cutting a desired optical fiber in the cable at the single portion without cutting the cable in its entirety, at a non-terminal position of the cable, to form a terminal of the fiber,

wherein the branching method is a post branching method of forming the terminal of the optical fiber at an optional non-terminal position of an existing optical fiber cable, and

wherein the desired optical fiber is cut and then withdrawn from the cable.

10. (Currently Amended) A branching method for an optical fiber cable containing a plurality of plastic optical fibers, comprising:

disposing the plurality of plastic optical fibers in a plurality of slots of a spacer;

removing a covering of the cable at a single portion of the cable; and

cutting a desired optical fiber in the cable at the single portion without cutting the cable in its entirety, at a non-terminal position of the cable, to form a terminal of the fiber,

wherein the branching method is a post branching method of forming the terminal of the optical fiber at an optional non-terminal position of an existing optical fiber cable, and

wherein ~~the cable is provided with a slotted spacer, and~~ the desired optical fiber is cut without cutting the spacer[[,]] to form the terminal of the optical fiber.

11. (Currently Amended) A branching method for an optical fiber cable containing a plurality of plastic optical fibers, comprising:

disposing the plurality of plastic optical fibers in a plurality of slots of a spacer;

removing a covering of the cable at a single portion of the cable; and

cutting a desired optical fiber in the cable at the single portion without cutting the cable in its entirety, at a non-terminal position of the cable, to form a terminal of the fiber,

wherein the branching method is a post branching method of forming the terminal of the optical fiber at an optional non-terminal position of an existing optical fiber cable, and

wherein the cable is provided with a tension member, and the desired optical fiber is cut without cutting the tension member, to form the terminal of the optical fiber.

12. (Original) The branching method according to Claim 11, wherein without substantially elastically deforming the tension member, the desired optical fiber is cut to form the terminal of the optical fiber.

13. (Original) The branching method according to Claim 11, wherein the terminal of the optical fiber is formed while the cable is in an extended state.

14. (Original) The branching method according to Claim 13, wherein the desired optical fiber is withdrawn from the cable and then cut.

15. (Original) The branching method according to Claim 13, wherein the desired optical fiber is cut and then withdrawn from the cable.

16. (Original) The branching method according to Claim 13, wherein the cable is provided with a slotted spacer, and the desired optical fiber is cut without cutting the spacer, to form the terminal of the optical fiber.

17.-20. (Canceled)

21. (New) The branching method according to Claim 3, further comprising:

extending the desired optical fiber by at least 0.2%.

22. (New) The branching method according to Claim 3, further comprising:

extending the desired optical fiber by at least 2.0%.

23. (New) The branching method according to Claim 3, further comprising:

extending the desired optical fiber by at most 5.0%.

24. (New) The branching method according to Claim 3, wherein removing comprises removing a length of between about 10 cm and about 40 cm of the covering.

25. (New) The branching method according to Claim 3, wherein removing comprises removing a length of between about 20 cm and about 30 cm of the covering.

26. (New) The branching method according to Claim 4, further comprising:

extending the desired optical fiber by at least 0.2%.

27. (New) The branching method according to Claim 4, further comprising:

extending the desired optical fiber by at least 2.0%.

28. (New) The branching method according to Claim 4, further comprising:

extending the desired optical fiber by at most 5.0%.

29. (New) The branching method according to Claim 4, wherein removing comprises removing a length of between about 10 cm and about 40 cm of the covering.

30. (New) The branching method according to Claim 4, wherein removing comprises removing a length of between about 20 cm and about 30 cm of the covering.

31. (New) The branching method according to Claim 9, further comprising:

extending the desired optical fiber by at least 0.2%.

32. (New) The branching method according to Claim 9, further comprising:

extending the desired optical fiber by at least 2.0%.

33. (New) The branching method according to Claim 9, further comprising:

extending the desired optical fiber by at most 5.0%.

34. (New) The branching method according to Claim 9, wherein removing comprises removing a length of between about 10 cm and about 40 cm of the covering.

35. (New) The branching method according to Claim 9, wherein removing comprises removing a length of between about 20 cm and about 30 cm of the covering.

36. (New) The branching method according to Claim 10, further comprising: extending the desired optical fiber by at least 0.2%.

37. (New) The branching method according to Claim 10, further comprising: extending the desired optical fiber by at least 2.0%.

38. (New) The branching method according to Claim 10, further comprising: extending the desired optical fiber by at most 5.0%.

39. (New) The branching method according to Claim 10, wherein removing comprises removing a length of between about 10 cm and about 40 cm of the covering.

40. (New) The branching method according to Claim 10, wherein removing comprises removing a length of between about 20 cm and about 30 cm of the covering.